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SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON
R

January 11, 1950

2-1-50 for Conks

Dear Admiral Hillenkoetter:

Reference is made to your memorandum of December 7, 1949, regarding the "Check List" network.

While I am glad to know that the network has been activated, I am somewhat concerned that there may be a misunderstanding with respect to its objectives. Your memorandum states at paragraph 2 that the purpose of the Check List is to focus attention on indicators pointing to "preparation or lack of preparation for war (hot or cold) on the part of the U.S.S.R." This objective is, I believe, altogether too broad; indeed it comprehends, in a sense, the entire Government intelligence program as related to the U.S.S.R.

It has been my understanding that the function of the Check List network was to provide timely warning of impending Soviet military action. Moreover, I feel strongly that the Check List operation will not be manageable unless the objective is thus limited. If the network devotes itself to "preparation or lack of preparation for war (hot or cold)", it will not only find itself inevitably engaged in extensive wasteful duplication of existing research and reporting (para. 8 b (3) of your memorandum), but, worse yet, its concentration will be so diffused that the indicators pointing to imminent military action will not be given the necessary emphasis.

Mr. Trueheart of my office recently discussed this matter informally with Mr. Childs and was assured that CIA's understanding of the objective of the Check List

network

Rear Admiral R. H. Hillenkoetter,
Director of Central Intelligence.

State Department review completed

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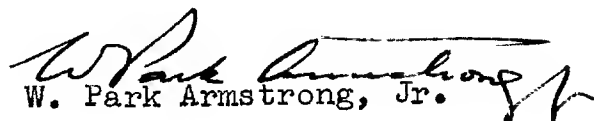
network is essentially the same as ours and that the apparent discrepancy described above will be resolved at the next meeting of the Check List officers. For the record, however, I believe it would be desirable to amend the statement of objectives in the reference memorandum along the following lines:

2. The objective of the Check List network is to provide timely warning of impending Soviet military action. To this end, the Check List network is expected

a. to focus the attention of intelligence analysts on specific indicators (positive and negative) of Soviet intentions to resort to military action in the near future, and

b. to provide an effective mechanism for interagency exchange of views on this subject at the working level.

Sincerely yours,


W. Park Armstrong, Jr.

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